

CLAIMS

1. A fastening device including a magazine holding at least one tab, the tab having a first portion and a second portion, the first and second portions being joined along a hinge such that the free ends of the first and second portions are biased away from each other, the first portion having a different size and/or shape to the second portion, the magazine including an opening through which the tab is dispensed, the opening including a retainer for retaining the second portion of the tab from moving in a first direction whilst allowing the first portion of the tab to move in the first direction, the tab being removable from the magazine in a second direction generally perpendicular to the first direction to a fastening position, and a fastening mechanism for driving joining the tab and items to be joined.
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2. A fastening device according to Claim 1, in which the fastener is a staple.
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3. A fastening device according to Claim 1, in which the fastener is in the form of a stitch.
4. A fastening device according to any one of the preceding claims, in which a mechanism is provided for selectively preventing the first portion of the tab from passing through the opening of the magazine.
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5. A fastening device according to Claim 4, in which the mechanism for selectively preventing the first portion of the tab from passing through the opening of the magazine comprises a mechanical means such as a manually actuated sliding member or an electronic push button to close the first opening in the magazine.
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6. A fastening device according to Claim 4 or Claim 5, in which, the magazine may be removed from the fastening device when a tab is not required.
7. A magazine suitable for use in a fastening device according to any one of the preceding claims, the magazine being arranged to hold at least one tab having a first portion and a second portion, the first and second portions being joined along a hinge such that the free ends of the first and second portions are biased away from each other, the first portion having a different size and/or shape to the second portion, the magazine includes an opening through which the tab is dispensed, the opening including a retainer for retaining the second portion of the tab from moving in a first direction whilst allowing the first portion of the tab to move in the first direction, the tab being removable from the magazine in a second direction generally perpendicular to the first direction.
8. A magazine according to Claim 7, in which the retainer is in the form of one or more projections or lips that extend into the opening of the magazine for retaining the second portion of the tab.
9. A magazine according to Claim 8, in which the projection or lip is arranged in a position such that, when the first and second portions of the tab are adjacent each other, the projection extends over an area of the second portion of the tab not covered by the first portion.
10. A magazine according to any one of the Claims 7 to 9, in which the tab members contained in the magazine are biased towards the opening of the magazine.
11. A magazine according to Claim 10, including a resilient biasing means, such as a spring, to bias the tab members towards the opening of the magazine.

12. A magazine according to Claim 11, in which the spring is a coil spring.
13. A magazine according to any one of Claims 7 to 12, formed from a plastic or metal material.
14. A magazine according to any one of Claims 7 to 13, including an openable or removable side through which the tabs may be inserted.
15. A magazine according to any one of Claims 7 to 14, formed of a transparent material.
16. A fastening device according to any one of Claims 1 to 6, including a magazine in accordance with any one of Claims 7 to 15.
- 10 17. A tab for use with a fastener device, the tab including a first portion and a second portion, the first and second portions being joined along a hinge such that the free ends of the first and second portions are biased away from each other, the first portion having a different size and/or shape to the second portion such that the second portion of the tab can be retained from moving in a first direction whilst allowing the second portion of the tab to move in the first direction, the tab being removable from a magazine in a second direction generally perpendicular to the first direction.
- 15 18. A tab according to Claim 17, in which the first portion of the tab is shorter than the second portion of the tab.
- 20 19. A tab according to Claim 17 or Claim 18, in which the first portion of the tab has a smaller width than the second portion of the tab.
20. A tab according to any one of Claims 17 to 19, in which the hinge of the tab is advantageously merely a fold between the first and second portions of the tab.

21. A tab according to any one of Claims 17 to 20, in which the tab is formed from a plastics material.
22. A tab according to Claim 21, in which the tab is formed from polypropylene.
- 5 23. A tab according to any one of Claims 17 to 22, in which the tabs is stamped or cut from a sheet of material.
24. A tab according to any one of Claims 17 to 23, having a thickness of between about 0.1mm and 0.75mm, and preferably of about 0.25mm.
- 10 25. A plurality of tabs according to any one of Claims 17 to 24, the tabs may be provided with printed matter so as to form labels.
26. A plurality of tabs according to any one of Claims 17 to 25, the tabs being releasably fastened together so that they may be handled conveniently as a single unit.
- 15 27. A plurality of tabs according to Claim 26, in which the plurality of tabs are held together by an encircling band.
28. A magazine according to any one of the Claims 7 to 15, including a plurality of tabs according to any one of Claims 17 to 27.
- 20 29. A magazine according to Claim 28, the magazine having an internal structure shaped to correspond to the tabs, and thereby maintain the tabs in alignment.
30. A fastening device according to any one of Claims 1 to 6, including a tab in accordance with any one of Claims 17 to 27.
31. A method of joining items comprising providing a tab having a first portion and a second portion, the first and second portions being joined along

a hinge such that the free ends of the first and second portions are biased away from each other, the first portion having a different size and/or shape to the second portion, restraining second portion of the tab from moving in a first direction whilst allowing the first portion of the tab to move in the first direction,

5 providing a number of items to be staples between the free ends of the first and second portions of the tab, and moving the items in a second direction generally perpendicular to the first direction to abut against the join between the first and second portions of the tab, and continuing the movement of the items to be joined to remove the tab in a second direction generally

10 perpendicular to the first direction, and passing a fastener through the first and second portions of the tab sandwiching the items to be joined.

32. A method according to Claim 31, in which the tabs are formed in accordance with any one of Claims 17 to 27.

33. A fastening device substantially as shown in or as described with
15 respect to any of the accompanying drawings.

34. A magazine for use with a fastening device substantially as shown in or as described with respect to any of the accompanying drawings.

35. A tab substantially as shown in or as described with respect to any of the accompanying drawings.

20 36. A method of fastening substantially as described with respect to any of the accompanying drawings.